

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2067

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUSAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AEDOC WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD PFOR MU

SUBJECT: AL GHOSAIBI REMARKS ON ARAB BOYCOTT

REF: STATE 93327

1. AL GHOSAIBI COMMENTS ON REMOVING FIRMS FROM BLACKLIST OR "SYRIAN FORMULA" HAVE NOT BEEN REFLECTED IN OMANGOV BOYCOTT POLICY. OMANI OFFICIALS HAVE SHOWN NO INCLINATION TO FOLLOW INDEPENDENT LINE IN GIVING PUBLIC DISPENSATION FOR FIRMS WHICH HAVE BEEN BLACKLISTED BY CENTRAL BOYCOTT OFFICE. OMANGOV PREFERS TO KEEP BOYCOTT ISSUE AS QUIET AS POSSIBLE BUT IS UNWILLING TO GET OUT IN FRONT OF OTHER ARAB STATES IN OPENLY MODIFYING POLICY.

2. NONETHELESS, UNOFFICIAL PRACTICE OF OMANGOV IS TO TRY TO DO BUSINESS WITH ANY FIRM IF THIS IS SPECIALLY ADVANTAGEOUS TO OMAN. COMMERCE MINISTRY CONTINUES TO BE RELAXED ABOUT ENFORCING BOYCOTT AGAINST FOREIGN
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FIRMS. FOR EXAMPLE, SULTAN QABOOS HAS REPORTEDLY

APPROVED LARGE ORDER FOR MOTOROLA COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT WHICH WOULD BE USED FOR UPGRADING PALACE'S COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM. THERE IS INCREASING SPECULATION AMONG LOCAL MERCHANTS THAT FORD DISTRIBUTORSHIP IN OMAN, TERMINATED IN 1972., MAY BE REACTIVATED. THESE EXCEPTIONS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE MADE FOR FIRM DOING SPECIAL ORDER FOR OMANGOVE, AND DISPENSATIONS ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE GRANTED FOR PRIVATE OMANI FIRMS OR CONTRACTORS.

3. BLACKLISTED FIRMS WISHING TO DO BUSINESS IN OMAN MIGHT CONSIDER MAKING LOW-KEY APPROACH TO COMMERCE MINISTRY OR OTHER RANKING OMANGOV OFFICIALS, CITING THEIR WILLINGNESS TO DO BUSINESS IN ARAB WORLD AND PRECEDENTS OF SYRIAN FORMULA AND AL GHOSAIBI REMARKS. PREVIOUS EXEMPTION BY SAUDI ARABIA OR ANOTHER MAJOR ARAB COUNTRY WOULD LEND SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT TO RELAXATION. JUDICIOUS CHOICE OF LOCAL AGENT COULD ALSO ADVANCE THEIR CASE. HOWEVER, FIRM SHOULD NOT DIRECTLY APPROACH BOYCOTT OFFICE, EITHER IN OMAN OR DAMASCUS, UNLESS REVERSAL OF ORIGINAL BOYCOTT DECISION IS CERTAIN, SINCE CENTRAL BOYCOTT OFFICE IS FAR LESS FLEXIBLE IN GRANTING EXEMPTIONS THAN IS OMAN GOVERNMENT.
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